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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Well, I think that I've recovered from the long Memorial Day weekend! We did a lot of work around the house, and could have done more had it not been for the fact that both my wife and I spent most of last Saturday attempting to refill our eyeglasses prescriptions. After my wife picked out one frame (I was keeping the three I have), and got "measured", we were told there would be a 2-hour wait to get the lenses made. And that was after I was told that my lenses were not in stock. We declined to wait, and returned to pick up her pairs later in the day. So, the day was pretty well shot!

And of course there were other typical annual complications. Memorial Day weekend is when we open up our pool. While we were getting everything ready (cleaning the debris around the cover, etc.), I noticed that the valve that sits on top of our pool filter was cracked so badly that it was not able to be secured to the filter. So we drove around town looking to find a replacement. Of the three places we checked, no one had this piece. We returned to two of the stores to check prices to order a replacement. We also looked at prices for a new filter in case the valve wasn't going to be cost-effective. It wasn't, so we opted to buy a new filter. We got it home, and unhooked the old one, bailed out 5-6 gallons of water, and managed to "roll" it away (the thing still had 200 pounds of wet sand inside! We hooked up the new one, filled it with water and new sand, and turned it on. After finding a few "leaks" we tightened up the connections more and we were in business. Our neighbors helped us get the cover off (another annual project in itself) and also helped us get the old filter out to the driveway so I can later bail the sand out so I can put it out with the trash.

Other Memorial Day weekend projects include getting the gardens ready for planting. I got out my trusty roto-tiller, and proceeded to till my two vegetable gardens and an area that I had cleared of shrubbery last year. I also tilled one of my neighbor's vegetable gardens. The next day we visited our favorite farm and picked out some plants and vegetables. Those haven't been planted yet! We also transplanted some plants that were over-growing the area where they had been planted a few years ago, to the area I had cleared the year before. So now all that remains is to plant everything that we bought, and see where we stand - I always seem to go overboard with flowers to be planted! And once those are in, find some extra cash and buy some mulch to finish off that "neat" landscaped look.

We topped it all off with a couple of barbecues and a few ice-cold drinks. Memorial Day weekend would not be the same without that added touch! So now I'm nursing more aches and pains that aren't likely to go away anytime

soon. Typical. I didn't even play any golf this past week. The one day that I had set aside to play turned out looking so ominous, I decided not to chance getting caught in some thunderstorms. As it turned out, the storm never got here, but it sure looked threatening!

So, I hope that you all enjoyed your long holiday weekend. We enjoyed ours although I know it sounds like were spent it all working. The feeling of satisfaction after seeing how it all turns out makes it seem less like work - at least for me. Have a great weekend!

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, I think we may FINALLY have enough messages from the UseNet to try to put a column together. It's been incredibly slow in the newsgroup lately, and I'm afraid that this bodes ill for this column.

Let's face it... no one wants to sit here and read my ranting and raving week after week without any hope whatsoever of even coming close to Atari-related stuff.

I could sit here and ruminate about past experiences... shows I've been to, developers I've met, old Atari acquaintances who seem to have gone insane, hacks I've done or heard of someone else doing... but c'mon, you've heard all of that before. Not only from me, but from a dozen others who were usually closer to 'the action' than I was.

So what are we left with here? Well, I guess the only answer is for you to post more on the UseNet and get all of your friends to do the same. I know it's tough. Hell, Atari hasn't made a computer in... what?... 10 or 11 years? It's tough to come up with new and exciting things with that kind of base.

I can tell you one thing in earnest though. The major reason that Dana and I continue to do what we do is that we've got such fond memories of the Atari community and it's like a big extended family.

So unless you want to be accused of breaking up a family, get your butt to the UseNet and start posting! [grin]

Oh, on another note, one of the message threads this week is about Ronald Hall's BBS. That made me think to include the following link from our buddy Scott Dowdle. The interviews included in this documentary are really interesting. It's the proverbial 'blast from the past'. Point your browser at http://www.montanalinux.org/bbs-memorial.html and get ready to relive the BBS revolution. Thanks, Scott!

Okay, let’s get to the news, hints, tips and info available from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Peter West posts this about the file finder, SuJi:

"Due to its flexibility, SuJi has long been the favourite file finder on the Atari range of computers running TOS, MagiC or MiNT. It will search for files matching an entered name or partial name (very extensive wild-cards can be used for search-masks); alternatively the contents of a directory, partition or whole disk can be listed. The results are displayed in a list which can be sorted in ascending or descending order on any of the columns (name, size, date, time, program flags, path of origin). If your desktop supports AV-Server, double-clicking an entry in the list will either launch the application if it is an executable file, or display the contents on the screen.

Now the original author, Daniel H?pfl, has released the sources, and Gerhard Stoll has used these to produce an improved version 1.36 that has three useful new features: Using Alt-O when the list is open brings up a dialog in which you can decide which columns are to be displayed (not many people will need to see the file time-stamp or the program flags, say), so making more room for long path-names to stay visible without scrolling the list window. In the same dialog you can also select which columns of selected entries (or the whole list) are to be written to the clipboard when you use Control-C; you can then paste this to a text editor for further processing. The third improvement is that both these options as well as the size and position of the list window are saved when the program is quit, so will come up the same way the next time you use SuJi.

SuJi remains freeware, is available in German, English or French, and may be downloaded from Gerhard’s web page:
http://home.ewr-online.de/~gstoll/

This has been a public service announcement from Peter West (who produced and updated the English ST-Guide hypertext for it)."

A different guy named Peter tells the first Peter that SuJi is a ...

"Great utility! Really useful when looking for dependencies etc. while coding.

However - it seems to have some minor issues related to memory protection. Thing gets killed as soon as I launch SuJi... perhaps passing a bad pointer or something?"

Gerhard Stoll asks the second Peter:

"Which system do you have?"

Peter2 tells Gerhard:

"It’s a Hades060, latest revisions of XaAES/FreeMiNT, Thing (latest official version, not the beta), NVDI5.x.

I’ve also noticed that it doesn’t find the AV server when double-clicking on files in the "list of found files"-list, so it could be something in the AV-related code. I’ve downloaded the sources and browsed them briefly, but I’m using GCC myself so I can’t really do something unless I translate the source first."

Gerhard replies:

"I’ve uploaded a beta version:

<http://home.ewr-online.de/~gstoll/bin/SUJI137beta.LZH>

Can you test it?"

Peter2 tells Gerhard:

"It works!! And this version seems to select some nicer fonts by default as well. Thanks Gerhard!"

Ronald Hall posts this about his baby, the DarkForce BBS:

"First, apologies for being late this month, many, many many things going on. An Atari SysOp is never bored.

Second, we’ve reached another milestone (of sorts) here, at The DarkForce! BBS. We just recently added our 500th user!

Because of that, I had to expand our user database. Some functions, such as MassMail will have some unintended consequences because of this. Current users will have multiple old MassMail entries waiting for them. Simply hit any key to go through them all. Everything should be returned to normal on your next call. Thanks for your patience and understanding in this matter.

So...here is to another 15 years and 500 more users!

Our monthly winner of the 3 magazine subscription to ST Magazine is:

Orion_

Congratulations, and remember, you can’t win if you don’t call each month!"

Jean-Luc Ceccoli asks for help finding schematics for Blitz Turbo:

"I’m looking for the schematics of the hardware that went with Blitzcopy, that used to allow to copy some uncopyable software.

Anyone know where I can find this?

Sorry, it’s Blitz Turbo. I own the original software floppy, but can’t find the HW anymore."

David Wade cuts right to the chase and posts simply:

"http://atari4ever.free.fr/hardware/drives.html"

Well folks, that’s it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week’s Gaming Section - Return of ’Command & Conquer’
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Nudity Delays Vista Halo 2!
  "Re-Mission" Blasts Cancer!
  And much more!

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->A-ONE’s Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Nudity Delays Halo 2 for Windows Vista

Last week, Microsoft issued a somewhat cryptic press release stating that it was delaying the release of the Windows Vista version of its popular Halo 2 game.

In the gaming community, which tracks product release dates and console sales figures the way baseball fans track home runs and ERAs, the rumors quickly spread that the delay was due to the discovery of partial nudity in the game.

It did not take long for the rumors to be confirmed and, of course, for a copy of the illicit image to make an appearance on the Web. The search was launched by the gaming site Kotaku, which offered a "[g]old star to the first tipster to present us with in-game pics of the offending dangly bits."

Within a few hours, someone sent in a screen capture of the nudity, which was attached to an obscure error message.

In a press release issued last Friday, Microsoft admitted that the initial production run of Halo 2 for Windows Vista did in fact contain partial nudity.

"It has come to our attention," the company said in a press release, "that an unfortunate, obscure content error which includes partial nudity was included in the map editor of our initial production of Halo 2 for Windows Vista. This file is not in the game itself, nor will someone who simply plays the game ever encounter it."

Although the partial nudity was attached to an error message in the map editor and not the game itself, the labeling rules of the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) required Microsoft to change its packaging to alert consumers to the presence of partial nudity.

The delay in the release of the game stemmed from the fact that Microsoft needed to apply the appropriate warning sticker to the game’s initial production run.

The ESRB issued its own press release stating that Microsoft had alerted the Board to "pertinent content found in a map editor tool that is being bundled with the game." As the Board dryly put it, "The content in question, although likely to be inaccessible to the vast majority of users, displays a photograph of an individual showing his bare backside to the user when a particular error occurs[.]"

So far, there is little more than speculation as to whether the nudity in question was inserted by a Microsoft employee or someone working for Bungie, the developer of the Halo franchise.

Not surprisingly, there has been rampant and often salacious speculation on various gaming discussion boards about how Microsoft might go about identifying the offender. The most common remark, not surprisingly, is that someone will get canned.

Whether someone gets fired over the prank remains to be seen, but what is certain is that the notoriety will be brief. Microsoft said in its statement that a patch is available for download, and that the patch will be applied automatically to any copy of Halo 2 that is connected to Microsoft’s Games for Windows live.

Return of ’Command & Conquer’

It’s another bleak forecast for the future in the new video game "Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars."

Yet it’s so much fun you probably won’t mind the prospects of an Earth politically splintered and environmentally devastated by an ever-spreading crystalline alien substance called Tiberium.

This latest saga marks one of the best, and only, games of its type for the Xbox 360. (The T-rated, $59.99 title is also available for Windows PCs for $10 less).

Like other real-time strategy titles, the gameplay is centered around collecting resources (in this case truckloads of Tiberium), constructing

barracks and other structures, and then sending your newly minted army into all-out war.

Nothing here really breaks away from the real-time strategy genre’s conventions, and that’s just fine.

The frenzied managerial pace of building forces, collecting tiberium and defeating rivals remains an intense experience. The hours will quickly pass as you conquer one mission after another.

There are several ways to play, but I recommend going through the single-player story modes first.

They not only serve as a good primer to the Xbox 360 controls and various units you can build (tanks, troops and air fighters among them), they also advance an intriguing story that’s filled with plenty of cheesy sci-fi twists and turns.

Anyone who’s played earlier games in the series, which date back to the mid-1990s, will get an especially big kick out of seeing what fanatical Nod leader Kane and other characters in the long-standing series are up to now.

Speaking of characters, one of the hallmarks of the series returns with a campy vengeance in "Tiberium Wars."

The full-screen, full-motion video segments between missions tell the story and feature great appearances from some Hollywood talent such as Battlestar Galactica’s Tricia Helfer, Billy Dee Williams and Michael Ironside.

Yes, it’s often painful watching these actors "act" in a video game. But I had a smile on my face the whole time, and seeing this classic feature from older "Command & Conquer" games conjured up a warm retro feeling.

Whether you enjoy the video sequences or the addicting gameplay, "Tiberium Wars" is a welcome return to a reinvigorated franchise.

Three stars out of four.

New Games For Weathering The Summer Doldrums

The summer video game doldrums are almost here, but a small flurry of new titles over the next couple of weeks may help tide gamers over until the fall bounty.

Microsoft Corp. is making the biggest splash with three games this week.

The software giant’s Xbox 360 console gets the long-awaited racing simulator "Forza Motorsport 2," as well as "Shadowrun," a shooter that mixes swords and sorcery with modern firepower such as rocket launchers and sniper rifles.

PC purists who sniff at the idea of playing a shooter on a console will finally get their hands on a Windows version of "Halo 2," Microsoft’s blockbuster sci-fi title for the original Xbox that came out nearly three years ago.

"Shadowrun" is also for sale in a PC version, and Microsoft is bridging the gap between PCs and consoles by letting players of the different versions combat each other over the company's Live online service.

"Forza 2," which was delayed from its original release date in late 2005, puts players behind the wheels of more than 300 super-realistic cars. Players can customize the performance and appearance of their rides and share them online.

Dan Greenawalt, game director for "Forza 2," said the game should do well despite hitting the market at the start of what is the industry's slowest season.

"We slipped (the release of) this game out and the reason is that you don't ship a date, you ship a game. It just wasn't the game we wanted to make," Greenawalt said. "I can't speak to the broader portfolio, but I think it's a great game at suboptimal time."

Owners of Nintendo Co. Ltd.'s Wii console have complained about a dearth of new titles, and they get a respite with "Mario Party 8," a collection of multiplayer mini games that make use of the machine's motion-sensitive controller.

"One game that will be a bigger hit than expected will be 'Mario Party 8', not because it's a particularly good game but because everything for the Wii is doing well right now," said Dan Hsu, editor-in-chief of gaming magazine EGM.

In mid-June, Nintendo will also offer "Big Brain Academy: Wii Degree," a console version of its popular mind exercise series for its DS handheld.

"Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Vegas," the popular tactical shooter from French publisher Ubisoft, storms onto Sony Corp.'s PlayStation 3 in mid-June.

But PS3 fans won't get an exclusive title until the end of July with the debut of "Lair," a gorgeous fantasy game in which players control flying, fire-breathing dragons. While not expected to drive sales of the PS3, "Lair" is an important addition to Sony's stable of games until it rolls out more A-list titles for the holidays.

"The PlayStation 3 seems to have a lack of killer apps ... but games like 'Lair' are more like Sony saying we're building a solid library," Hsu said. "You don't want to be defined by just one game."

In terms of overall sales, the PS3 is straggling behind the Xbox 360 and the surging Wii, but Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo are all saving their best games for the end of the year, when the industry racks up half of its annual sales.

"Market share is not going to be decided this summer, it will happen this holiday season," said Evan Wilson, an analyst with Pacific Crest Securities. "It's summertime, there are not a lot of hardware sales, and people are outside and not inside playing games."

Video Game Maker Target Teens With Cancer

Cigna Corp. said on Wednesday it will offer HopeLab's "Re-Mission" video game, which lets teens and young adults blast cancer while learning how to improve the odds of beating the disease, free of charge on its Web site.

"'Re-Mission' has demonstrated that video games have the power to help teenagers better adhere to their cancer treatment and embrace key behaviors that improve their health and quality of life," Dr. Glenn Pomerantz, medical director of its CIGNA HealthCare unit, said in a statement.

Teenaged cancer patients can face a unique set of challenges, medical experts said. They are old enough to be responsible for their treatment, but may be too young to understand the potentially deadly consequences of skipping required medications that may make them feel sick, lose their hair, get acne, or gain weight.

Pam Omidyar, a medical researcher married to eBay Inc. founder Pierre Omidyar, launched HopeLab in 2001, seeking to improve the health of young people with a mix of good science and fun technology.

HopeLab, a Northern California-based nonprofit organization, teamed with video game developers and animators, cancer experts, cell biologists, psychologists and young patients, seeking to make a high-quality video game that would educate as well as entertain.

The results was "Re-Mission," a teen-rated shooting game featuring a nanobot named Roxxi who roams inside the bodies of fictional cancer patients, destroying cancer cells, battling bacterial infections and managing side effects associated with cancer and cancer treatments.

Since the game's launch early last year, HopeLab said it has delivered 76,000 copies of "Re-Mission" on disc or via download on its Web site (www.re-mission.net).

Cigna's site (www.CIGNA.com/re-mission) will offer the game.

HopeLab tested "Re-Mission" in a randomized, controlled trial of 375 male and female cancer patients aged 13 to 29, who were enrolled at 34 medical centers in the United States, Canada and Australia.

Preliminary study results suggested that playing the video game increased quality of life and cancer-related knowledge.

The "Re-Mission" players also maintained levels of chemotherapy in their blood and showed higher rates of antibiotic use than those in the control group, indicating that the game helped patients stick to cancer therapy regimens.

"The 'Re-Mission' video game is an important tool to help improve their understanding of cancer, its treatments and effects, which can result in more confidence in their ability to deal with the disease and more consistent compliance with their treatment," said Dr. Gary Dahl, a pediatric oncologist at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford University in California and a principal investigator for the "Re-Mission" study.

"'Re-Mission' works. It gives young people with cancer a sense of power and control over their disease," HopeLab President Pat Christen said.

Cigna’s Pomerantz said the insurer plans to work with HopeLab to help young patients with other chronic conditions.

Next on HopeLab’s list: obesity.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

GoDaddy Agrees To Run Domains In Limbo

GoDaddy.com, the leading registration company for Internet addresses, has agreed to take over and manage more than 850,000 domain names belonging to customers of a troubled rival, officials announced Tuesday.

The deal, reached with the support of the Internet’s key oversight agency, means that customers of that rival, RegisterFly, could once again renew names, or transfer them elsewhere if they do not want to stay with GoDaddy.

Those names had been in limbo following financial and operational troubles at RegisterFly. In some cases individuals, groups and businesses were finding their Web sites inoperable because they could not properly renew their addresses before they had expired, nor could they move them to another company, officials said.

"For the past few months, they were pretty much in the dark and there was a lot of frustration there," GoDaddy Chief Executive Bob Parsons said in an interview. "All that is a thing of the past."

Parsons refused to disclose terms of the transfer deal, saying they are confidential. But he said GoDaddy isn’t buying RegisterFly, so any lawsuits and other previous disputes remain with RegisterFly.

The deal calls for RegisterFly to give GoDaddy its customer databases. Transfers of names will be automatic, and GoDaddy will notify existing RegisterFly customers about the switch and set up a Web page and telephone hotline. GoDaddy expects to start running those names within a week.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, the organization in charge of the Internet’s addressing policies, said the deal was good for RegisterFly customers.

"GoDaddy is a well-known, large customer-service-driven organization, and so that should diminish the sorts of problems people have experienced," said Paul Levins, ICANN’s vice president for corporate affairs.

The deal also marks a win for GoDaddy, which can make money when those names are up for renewal.

"If it wasn’t for that, our interest in doing the deal would be diminished quite a bit," Parsons said. "It is going to take a certain degree of efforts on our part. We’re going to have to answer any questions customers have and resolve any issues."

ICANN already had moved to yank RegisterFly’s accreditation and sued the company for its databases. Levins said ICANN would proceed with the lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles, saying the company still wasn’t prominently notifying customers of the decertification decision.

GoDaddy Group Inc. manages more than 20 million domain names under ".com," ".net" ".org," ".biz," ".info" and other suffixes. Like RegisterFly, GoDaddy functions as a registrar, meaning it registers names on its customers’ behalf and submits them to a central database for each suffix, known as a registry.

US Internet ’Spam King’ Arrested

US prosecutors said they captured on Wednesday a nefarious Internet marketer responsible so much junk e-mail they called him "Spam King."

Robert Soloway, 27, was arrested in Seattle, Washington, a week after being indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of identity theft, money laundering, and mail, wire, and e-mail fraud.

"Spam is a scourge of the Internet, and Robert Soloway is one of its most prolific practitioners," said US Attorney for the Western District of Washington Jeffrey Sullivan.

"Our investigators dubbed him the ’Spam King’ because he is responsible for millions of spam emails."

Between November of 2003 and May of 2007 Soloway "spammed" tens of millions of e-mail messages to promote websites at which his company, Newport Internet Marketing, sold products and services, according to prosecutors.

Soloway routinely moved his website to different Internet addresses to dodge detection and began registering them through Chinese Internet service providers in 2006 in an apparent ploy to mask his involvement.

Spam messages sent by Soloway used misleading "header" information to dupe people into opening them, according to Sullivan.

Soloway is accused of using "botnets," networks of computers, to disguise where e-mail originated and of forging return addresses of real people or businesses that wound up blamed for unwanted mailings.

If convicted as charged, Soloway will face a maximum sentence of more than 65 years in prison and a fine of 250,000 dollars.

Prosecutors want to seize approximately 773,000 dollars they say Soloway made from his spamming-related activities.

Spam Flows Despite High-Profile Arrest

Junk e-mail continued to land in mailboxes around the world Thursday, despite the arrest a day earlier of a man described as one of the world's most prolific spammers.

Even if Robert Alan Soloway is ultimately convicted and his operations shuttered, spam experts say dozens are in line to fill the void.

"In the short term, the effect it's going to have is more symbolic more than anything else," said John Levine, co-author of "Fighting Spam for Dummies." "Soloway is a large spammer, but hardly the only large spammer."

Levine said Soloway was a good target because he operates in the United States and has taken few steps to cover his tracks.

Soloway, 27, was once on a top 10 list of spammers kept by The Spamhaus Project, an international anti-spam organization. Others have since topped him, mostly based in Russia and other countries out of reach of U.S. or European law.

But Soloway remains on a Spamhaus list of about 135 spammers deemed responsible for as much as 80 percent of all junk e-mail, and one Spamhaus official considers him in the top 20.

"Most of the Russian gangs seem to have a lot more freshly hijacked computers and are able to deliver much more spam into people's inboxes," said Vincent Hanna, a European investigator for Spamhaus. "The stuff that Robert Soloway had under this control, let's call it 'second grade.'"

Soloway was arrested Wednesday on charges of mail fraud, wire fraud, e-mail fraud, aggravated identity theft and money laundering. Prosecutors say Soloway has sent millions of junk e-mails since 2003 and continued even after Microsoft Corp. won a $7 million civil judgment against him in 2005 and the operator of a small Internet service provider in Oklahoma won a $10 million judgment.

Soloway could face decades in prison, though prosecutors said they have not calculated what sentence range he might face.

Like most spammers these days, authorities say, Soloway sent out unsolicited bulk e-mails using networks of compromised computers called "zombies." These are generally home computers whose owners typically have no idea that their machines have been infected with viruses or other malicious programs; service providers can't easily block messages from zombies because they are mixed in with legitimate messages.

What set Soloway apart was his focus on spam designed to sell tools and services for companies and organizations to send their own junk e-mail, said Patrick Peterson, vice president of technology at anti-spam vendor IronPort Systems Inc.

Other types of spam were largely unaffected by the arrest. One Gmail account collected messages Thursday promising deals on Viagra and other medicines, while an AOL account drew an offer for two large, mouthwatering pizzas.

IronPort said it saw no notable drop in spam volume, with 70 billion messages in a 24-hour period, unchanged from two weeks earlier. The

company said spam has doubled from about 36 billion a day last May.

Anne Mitchell, who runs the anti-spam consultancy Institute for Spam and Internet Public Policy, said an individual user who happens to be on Soloway's list might see a big drop, but the collective impact is negligible.

"It's not that different from the mafia," she said. "Many times the feds grab a high-ranking don but the mafia didn't go away. Someone's going to step up and fill his void."

Nonetheless, anti-spam experts lauded the arrest, calling it an encouraging sign that authorities are taking spam seriously. Compared with civil lawsuits that have led to multimillion dollar judgments, prosecutions have been rare.

"Criminal prosecutions are absolutely necessary," said Richi Jennings, lead analyst for e-mail security with Ferris Research. "It adds a whole new level of fear to the lives of these spammers."

Joseph Smith, 43, a Web designer in Greensboro, N.C., said he couldn't say for sure the arrest resulted in a decrease in spam Thursday, but he was hopeful.

"I can see the Net becoming a little more secure now and becoming a more enjoyable experience," he said.

Microsoft spokesman Lou Gellos said the arrest not only removes Soloway from spamming "but it throws caution to others that are doing it as well. There's hope that this causes a ripple, if not a wave."

At Wednesday's news conference in Seattle announcing the arrest, U.S. Attorney Jeff Sullivan acknowledged that "others sometimes take their place, but we want it to be a deterrent."

Jobs, Gates Reunite Onstage At Digital Conference

In a rare public appearance together, rival tech titans Steve Jobs and Bill Gates met on stage Wednesday night at a tech conference here in Southern California.

Their meeting was more love fest than slug fest. Jobs and Gates, appearing at the D: All Things Digital conference, talked about their history together and the future of personal computing. Still, the audience wondered if their would be fireworks between the two. Apple CEO Jobs joked: "We kept our marriage secret for over a decade."

Their mood echoed the spirit at a Macworld conference a decade ago in Boston where Jobs told attendees: "If we want to move forward and see Apple healthy and prosperous again, we have to let go of this notion that for Apple to win, Microsoft has to lose." Back then, Jobs was joined by Microsoft co-founder Gates via satellite hookup as the software giant committed to delivering Apple Macintosh versions of its Office suite and Web browser.

Wednesday, Gates said the tech industry is healthy. "We'll look back on this as one of the great periods of invention," he said. Jobs said

personal computers have proved resilient but there will be an "explosion" of post-PC devices. "IPhone is one of them," he said, referring to Apple’s hotly anticipated cellphone out next month.

The appearance generated early buzz. Wired magazine called it the biggest reunion since Simon & Garfunkel. Apple and Microsoft remain intense rivals. Microsoft dominates personal computing with Windows, while Macs have a single-digit market share. Apple is a force in digital music with its iPod and iTunes Music Store. Microsoft’s Zune music player is a distant also-ran. Apple’s iPhone launch next month is one of the most anticipated new gadgets in years.

When Wall Street Journal tech writer Walter Mossberg pointed out to Jobs during another session that iTunes effectively makes Apple a big Windows software developer, Jobs quipped: "It’s like giving a glass of ice water to somebody in hell." The conference brought a host of announcements:

* Jobs said the Apple TV set-top box will now play YouTube videos. The gadget wirelessly plays music and video stored on computers on widescreen TVs.

* Palm founder Jeff Hawkins unveiled Palm Foleo, a $499 (after $100 rebate) "mobile companion" to smart phones that looks like a compact laptop. It’s equipped with a 10-inch screen, full-size keyboard and Web browser. Due this summer, it’s linked to smart phones through wireless Bluetooth technology.

* Start-up Livescribe showed a fountain-pen-size "smart pen" that records text written on special paper. It also records audio, which can be played back. Text and audio can also be uploaded to computers for replay. It will be sold later this year for less than $200.

Also attending the conference, which ends Thursday: Google CEO Eric Schmidt; Arizona senator and GOP presidential candidate John McCain; film director George Lucas; and YouTube founders Chad Hurley and Steve Chen.

Google Street View a Peeping Tom?

Google, in addition to organizing the world’s information, apparently also wants to allow you to photographically navigate any public space. Earlier this week, Google announced Street View for Google Maps. It’s a new feature that enables users to view and navigate 360-degree, street-level imagery from several U.S. cities.

But the easy availability and potential misuse of the photos is raising privacy concerns from several corners.

The Street View photos, found at maps.google.com, are currently available for specific, blue-outlined streets. Initially, Street View includes areas of the San Francisco Bay, New York City, Las Vegas, Denver, and Miami, although the company said it will soon expand elsewhere in the U.S.

With these photos, the Mountain View, California-based company said in a statement, users can virtually walk the streets of a city, check out a restaurant before arriving, and even zoom in on bus stops and street signs to make travel plans.

The photos are not real-time captures, but they can include windows of apartment buildings, houses, or businesses, through which private details may be viewed. In an article in Friday's New York Times, for instance, Oakland, California resident Mary Kalin-Casey expressed her dismay at being able to see her cat Monty in the living room window of her second-floor apartment, via Street View.

"The issue that I have ultimately," she told the Times, "is about where you draw the line between taking public photos and zooming in on people's lives." She said the next step could be seeing books on her shelf.

Within Street View Help, there is a link to "Report Inappropriate Image," within which there are such reporting options as "this image infringes on my privacy" and "this image presents personal security concerns," but the navigation paths to this reporting are not immediately evident.

"Most companies," said Brad Shimmin, an analyst for industry research firm Current Analysis, "won't sell photos if you can identify people" in a given, private setting. He noted that people and objects seen in public spaces constitute news, and there is no apparent privacy right there - especially because Google is not presently making money from the images.

The borderline, he suggested, is being able to see into people's windows and their private lives, whose visual accessibility from a public space might be legal but runs counter to U.S. notions of privacy.

Google apparently has even more plans for photographic and data mapping. On Wednesday, Google announced it had purchased Panoramio, a company based in Spain that enables photographers to link their digital images to the exact location on the planet where they were taken, via Google Maps.

Concurrent with the Street View announcement at the Where 2.0 conference in San Jose, the company also announced the launch of Mapplets. This new tool allows developers and consumers to create miniature Web pages inside Google Maps and then put anything there that could go on a normal Web page. This includes HTML, JavaScript, or Flash. The idea is to create miniature applications, such as real estate search, current weather conditions, or distance measurement.

In the past, Google has shown a willingness to accommodate user concerns over privacy and security with better, user-controlled options. With malicious uses for these new technologies not difficult to imagine, it remains to be seen what Google's reaction might be.

EU States Share Monitoring of Militant Web Sites

European Union states have started sharing monitoring of militant Web sites, including sites linked to al-Qaeda, a draft statement agreed by the bloc's ambassadors on Wednesday shows.

Police say the Internet has taken on huge importance for militant groups, enabling them to share know-how and spread propaganda to a mass audience, and to plan operations.

"The (EU) member states have started to work on joint projects. At present some member states under German lead responsibility are sharing the task of analyzing al Qaeda's media department as-Sahab," the draft

prepared for the next meeting of EU justice and interior ministers in June said.

Al Qaeda has its own media arm, as-Sahab, whose output has included a series of statements by its senior leaders.

The EU police agency Europol is building an information portal to allow exchange of information on militant Web sites monitoring, the draft said.

The portal is to include a list of links of monitored Web sites, statements by terrorist organizations, and details on experts checking the web in EU countries, including their language competence and technical expertise. Expert meetings will also be organized.

Western security analysts say al Qaeda and its offshoots have been very adept at using new media, publishing footage of violent executions and attacks on British forces in Iraq on the Internet within hours of them happening.

"Internet use plays a major role in the logistic, operational and communication network of terrorist organizations," the statement said.

"Terrorists use the Internet not only as a means to communicate and spread propaganda, but also to radicalize, recruit and train terrorists, to spread instructions on how to carry out concrete offences and to transfer covert information," it said.

Germany, which holds the rotating EU presidency, has been pressing the 27 EU states to cooperate on web monitoring, arguing that not all member states have experts who can translate and analyze Web sites used by militants.

"The systematic cooperation in sharing the task of monitoring and assessing the Internet needs to be further strengthened," the statement said.

Microsoft To Unveil Coffee-Table-Shaped Computer

Microsoft Corp. will unveil a coffee-table-shaped "surface computer" on Wednesday in a major step towards co-founder Bill Gates’s view of a future where the mouse and keyboard are replaced by more natural interaction using voice, pen and touch.

Microsoft Surface, which has a 30-inch display under a hard-plastic tabletop, allows people to touch and move objects on screen for everything from digital finger painting and jigsaw puzzles to ordering off a virtual menu in a restaurant.

It also recognizes and interacts with devices placed on its surface, so cell phone users can easily buy ringtones or change payment plans by placing their handsets on in-store displays, or a group of people gathered round the table can check out the photos on a digital camera placed on top.

The world’s largest software maker said it will manufacture the machine itself and sell it initially to corporate customers, deploying the first units in November in Sheraton hotels, Harrah’s casinos, T-Mobile stores,

and restaurants.

The company is selling the Surface for between $5,000 and $10,000 each, but aims to bring prices down to consumer levels in three to five years and introduce various shapes and forms.

"We see this as a multibillion dollar category, and we envision a time when surface computing technologies will be pervasive, from tabletops and counters to the hallway mirror," Chief Executive Steve Ballmer said in a statement.

Analysts say the first few applications only hint at what is possible.

"The potential for the interface is huge," said Matt Rosoff, an analyst with Directions on Microsoft, an independent research firm. "Once you open it up to applications, what you can think of is limitless."

Microsoft held demonstrations of the technology last week and Ballmer will officially introduce it at the Wall Street Journal's "D: All Things Digital" conference on Wednesday.

Microsoft shunned its usual PC manufacturing partners and decided to take control of the surface computer's hardware production using an undisclosed contract manufacturer. It will run the Windows Vista operating system.

Microsoft has a mixed record with new technology. Its Zune music player has not yet become a major challenger to Apple Inc.'s iPod, but its Xbox 360 game console has enjoyed early success in the battle of next-generation game machines.

For years Gates has championed touch-screen technology such as the tablet PC with little success, but the Surface is a totally different shape and allows for multiple users at once.

In a demonstration, Microsoft placed a digital camera with a wireless chip on the tabletop. The Surface recognized the camera and sent its pictures to the display, allowing people around the table to sift through them, grabbing and turning pictures or making them bigger or smaller by spreading or narrowing their fingers.

Microsoft showed in another demonstration how Deutsche Telekom cell phone operator T-Mobile USA, one of its launch partners, could deploy the computer in its stores.

A customer can grab a phone off the shelf, place it on the tabletop where it will recognize the device and pop up the handset's specifications and information to the screen. For a side-by-side comparison with another phone, the customer can put down a second handset next to the first phone.

"It's drop-dead simple and people really like it, because it mimics what they do in the real world," said Pete Thompson, general manager of Microsoft's surface computing business.

Microsoft said at launch it will deploy a virtual concierge for Harrah's Entertainment Inc.'s casinos in Las Vegas and place the surface computers in the lobbies of Starwood Hotel & Resorts Worldwide Inc.'s Sheraton hotels.

It also signed a distribution and development agreement with

slot-machine maker International Game Technology.

Dog Lovers Warned About Online Puppy Scam

Think that puppy in the e-mail looks cute?

You'd better ignore it. The American Kennel Club and the Council of Better Business Bureaus are warning consumers about a new e-mail scam that is conning people into spending hundreds or thousands of dollars on puppies that they actually never receive.

"Because of the emotional investment, consumers are more vulnerable to being taken advantage of when it comes to a cute, cuddly puppy than with any other purchase," said Lisa Peterson, an AKC spokeswoman, in a written statement. "A dog is a major investment - a living, breathing being who will rely on you for 10 years or more. Take time to educate yourself on the hallmarks of a egitimate and responsible breeder."

Both the AKC and the business bureau report they've recently received complaints from people who have lost money after responding to online solicitations or newspaper ads about puppies for sale. The scammer, who generally poses as a breeder, either sends out e-mails or puts up ads offering up free or inexpensive puppies. The ads have been spotted on MySpace postings, Web sites, and in newspaper classified sections. The scammer claims he's affiliated with a religious organization and is being relocated to a foreign country and needs to find a new home for the puppies.

"The consumer can be taken in by the sincerity of the scammer, who'll say that they don't care about money and just want to find a good home for their beloved puppies," said Steve Cox, VP of communications for the CBBB, in a written statement. "But then the fees for shipping the pet mount up and the consumer can lose hundreds of dollars before realizing they've been conned and will never get their puppy."

Both organizations offer this advice to anyone looking to buy a puppy:

Do your research. Ask if the breeder is a member of an AKC-affiliated club and contact the club to verify membership or check recent listings of available AKC litters from breeders at the club's Web site. Potential dog owners also can check with the BBB and the AKC to see if there are any complaints about the breeder. Request references and speak to other people who have purchased dogs from this breeder, especially if the breeder doesn't live near you.

Good breeders focus on the puppy, not the payment. Beware of breeders who seem overly concerned with getting paid. Any reputable breeder will be far more concerned with the appropriateness of the potential pet home than what and when they're getting paid. Make sure you have clear expectations - ideally in writing - of how and when the pup will be paid for. Be especially wary of any breeder who insists that you wire money and who calls to ask for more money to be wired to cover last-minute shipping fees.

Don't be fooled by a slick Web site. Unscrupulous breeders and even outright scammers can be represented by professional-looking Web sites that lure you in with fraudulent pictures of adorable puppies. At the very least, speak with the breeder on the telephone and ideally meet the breeder

and the puppy in person. If you locate a breeder online, never send money without checking their references and credentials first.

Take your time. Beware of breeders who claim to have multiple breeds ready to ship immediately. It’s highly unlikely that your perfect puppy will be available for shipping on the day you call. Gestation and socialization of a litter takes months - no puppy should be separated from its mother before it’s eight weeks old.

Report a scam. Anyone who has experienced a dog-related scam should report it to local law enforcement, as well as to their local Better Business Bureau.

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